

Supervisor Pam Slater's

E-Slate electronic newsletter

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News From Sacramento Grows Worse

So it begins. The announcement that Buck Knives is moving its operation – including 250 jobs – from San Diego County to Idaho should send a message to Sacramento that we must resolve the budget shortfall once and for all.

If the budget passes in its current form, it will result in cutbacks in services. The county's expected impact in lost vehicle license fee revenue next fiscal year is at least \$124 million.

And this crisis hits hard and fast. A proposal by the state to no longer “backfill” the vehicle license fees, as promised, will cost San Diego County \$60 million this fiscal year, from February to June. Thirty million of these dollars are budgeted for public safety – cops on the beat, firefighters, maintaining county jails, medical examiners and disaster preparedness. This is why supervisors Tuesday delayed action on earmarking \$29 million for public health programs. Until we know the full extent of this crisis, this board simply cannot commit funding.

And the news keeps getting worse.

State “realignment” of services transfers to counties the most volatile caseloads. The \$1.10 extra on a pack of cigarettes represents a declining revenue source. People are not smoking as much as they used to; those that still do will get their tobacco cheaper through shops on Indian reservations or online on the Internet. The “tax the rich” fails to take into account there are less rich to tax; and those remaining are very apt to move across state lines. Just look at Incline Village in Lake Tahoe or Arizona for validation.

Finally, the one-cent increase in the sales tax is also deceptive. The governor proposes having counties tie very expensive, labor-intense services and programs to this tax. Yet nobody believes for a moment that the sales tax will *not* be reduced again once the economy turns back into the black. Thus, counties are left with the caseloads but not the money to provide the services. In fact, the last time the state forced municipalities to “realign,” San Diego County was forced to hire an additional 800 people to handle additional state mandates.

This Board of Supervisors will not make unwise or unjust decisions. It is up to all of us to make sure our state representatives realize this budget is simply not in the best interest of every Californian.

BLOOD SHORTAGE CONTINUES... Now in its third week of a dangerous shortage, the San Diego Blood Bank needs our help to immediately replenish its supplies. This unprecedented appeal comes in the face of increasingly significant blood shortages throughout the nation, leaving many parts of the country with less than a one-day supply.

Additionally, the looming conflict in Iraq has intensified this crisis. The Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism, made up of all of the nation's blood organizations, has stated it "is prepared to support the military's blood needs when and if it is called upon. In order to ensure in advance that patients are protected with a safe and adequate supply, we urge the public to help by donating blood as frequently as every eight weeks. It is the blood on the shelves today that saves lives."

How acute is this crisis in California? The American Red Cross estimates blood donations have plummeted 70 percent of projections since Christmas. Since only 3 percent of the state's population gives blood, California often imports upwards of 40 percent of the blood needed for everything from routine operations to emergency care. Hospital patients alone use 16,000 units of blood each week. Especially needed are blood types B and O.

Anyone at least 17 years old, in good health and weighing at least 110 pounds, may donate blood. To find out where, call San Diego Blood Bank at (619) 296-6393.

AROUND THE DISTRICT... Watch for a new park to debut in Solana Beach, after the City Council approved plans for a 1.7-mile linear walkway to compliment the coastal city's rail corridor. If all works out, the five coastal cities will have a coordinated trail system for bikers, joggers, walkers and casual strollers. Through \$10,000 of Third District Community Projects funding I had approved by the board, new security lighting will be provided for the Lomas Santa Fe bridge, landscaping by the train station and visitor center, and updated map directories and partial funding for 24 Highway 101 custom banners.

A true newspaperman has passed on. Former Ramona Sentinel publisher-editor Tom Griffin, 80, succumbed to natural causes last week. He ran the community weekly for 26 years. ... Congratulations to Lisa Baldwin, the new postmaster in Encinitas. She has worked for the agency for 14 years. ... And another congrats goes to Encinitan Karen Benedict of the Silver Gate Yacht Club who recently was honored for her efforts to help the disabled community enjoy time on the water through the annual Wheelchair Regatta. ... And my final congrats goes to La Jolla High sophomore Dorian Mattrey, winner of a \$5,000 scholarship and two tickets to next week's Super Bowl. Dorian won the scholarship through the wireless technology touchdown contest. His concept was for a wireless application fans could use with their handheld devices to track individual players or the football.

AT THE COUNTY ... File this in the vision category. Realizing it will take years to plan and finance, supervisors this week unanimously approved a motion beginning the process for the San Luis Rey River Regional Park. The 8-mile park will run north of state Route 76 between Bonsall starting at the old bridge and Interstate 15. It will include trails for hiking, bicycling and horses; picnic and play areas; scenic outlooks; and some recreation areas. The park will be between 500 and 600 acres and will include property on both sides of the San Luis Rey River.

In other actions, supervisors:

- Denied a development plan for Jacumba Valley Ranch, containing 1,000 homes, golf course, senior center and equestrian facility. The project has been in the planning stages for several years and the developer owes the county more than \$26,000 for environmental

and plan fees. The board indicated there would be no further extensions in November 2002.

- Received the sixth annual Methamphetamine Report Card detailing the extent of meth addiction in San Diego County. The report tracks such indicators as arrests, emergency room visits and deaths. Period covered is 2001.
- Agreed to purchase no than 250,000 sheets annually, or spend more than \$40,000 annually, for special paper used for all birth and death certificates. The five-year contract with Midwest Banknote Co. meets all state mandates. The vendor supplies its paper to all jurisdictions in California.
- Approved spending \$1,204 to allow a San Diego criminalist to travel to Oxford, England where he will participate this March in the fourth Joint Meeting of the Forensic Science Society and California Association of Criminalists. The individual will speak on advances in DNA investigations.
- Approved a request by the Sheriff's Department to donate a 1973 utility trailer and a 1986 F-350 one-ton flatbed vehicle to the Imperial County Sheriff's Department for search-and-rescue operations. The donations are valued at \$5,350. The San Diego agency no longer uses the vehicles and will save on maintenance costs.

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